

Families

supporting children and young people experiencing Change and Loss as a result of coronavirus



1. Try to stay calm and appear in control

Let your children see that you are taking steps to control the situation – feeling that adults know what they are doing is very reassuring. To help your children remain calm, it helps if adults around them can manage their own emotions.

When things get stressful, try to regulate your emotions. If you have another person you can talk with who is calm that can help. Do an activity that helps you relax.

2. Acknowledge your own feelings about change and loss and take care of yourself

At the end of a difficult day, take time for yourself. It's OK that we are not always calm and consistent in everything we do.

Pay attention to what you need and then do what you have the energy and resources to do. The most important thing is taking care of yourself and your children.

3. Ask how your child is feeling

"Are you doing OK today?"

Listen to their responses and accept them. A caring empathetic relationship is key. Make eye contact with your child, sit near to them at their level, allow them to talk, nod in response to their words and acknowledge the situation

'I can see that you are worried' .

Your child is more likely to share emotions, thoughts, and concerns if feeling safe and accepted. Talk with your child about his/her worries; they can be worrying that something could happen to you or them. Talk with your child about feelings and needs.

4. Use reassuring language

'This will pass' 'The government is going to fix this' 'We are all going to take care of each other'

5. Normalise your child's reaction

"The way you are feeling is normal, this is happening to other people too and this feeling will change".

Accept children's play. It is normal for children to act out at times. Allow questions and conversations.

6. Answer questions honestly at the time when asked (where possible)

Your child may have lots of questions. Children may ask the same questions again and again. This is normal. It will take time for everyone to process what is going on.

If they ask a question to which you are not sure how to respond, ask them what they think about the issue. Don't be afraid to say you don't know but will try and find out for them.

'That's an interesting question, let me think about it and get back to you'

This gives you thinking time.
Remember to get back to them.

7. Remember what you say can have a lasting effect on your child.

Let your child know they don't have to react like the adults and try to accept whatever your child is feeling

"It's OK not to be worried all the time, it's OK to have fun."

8. Try to set up the day in a way that provides structure, predictability and moderation of stress

Everyone will do this in a different way but it can be helpful to plan and write out a daily routine with your family, including your children's ideas. With any planned activity, regular breaks to stretch, breathe, and have fun together are important. Experts recommend a short break every 20/30 minutes.

9. Remember children cope best when they feel included

To reassure, you may wish to remind everyone to wash their hands lots. Let your children get involved in preparations.

Maybe they can disinfect a few surfaces and door handles. This will help them feel in control too.

10. Consider how you are linking with the education placement

Children and young people may be missing the adults in school they feel close to. Good communication with educational placements stimulates emotional coping.

When it comes to going back to school, talk with your establishment link person. Together you can work out how best to make the return to school life as easy as possible.